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DEPARTMENT FOR S/SEMEP FRED HOF; NSC FOR DAN SHAPIRO

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SUBJECT: GOI INTERAGENCY DISCUSSION ON TURKEY

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY DCM LUIS MORENO FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (S) SUMMARY. On November 15, Israeli officials told NSC Senior Director Dan Shapiro during a GOI interagency briefing hosted by National Security Advisor Uzi Arad, that they believe Turkey is engaged in an ongoing strategic realignment towards the Middle East and away from the West, and that the bilateral relationship with Israel is a casualty of that realignment. The GOI expects the AKP to continue to consolidate its power domestically through increased Islamization and control over Turkish institutions, including the military. The GOI also thinks that Turkey is drawing closer to Iran, including assisting Iran in evading financial sanctions, and will maintain ties to Hamas, which the AKP does not consider a terrorist organization. Therefore, the GOI believes there is little it can do to prevent a further decline in relations with Turkey, but it is trying to preserve what it can by minimizing disputes and seeking gradually escalating diplomatic exchanges. On some issues, such as pressing Turkey to block the transshipment of Iranian arms to Syria, they asked for U.S. help. Fred Hof, Special Coordinator for Regional Affairs for the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, A/DCM, and Poloff also attended the briefing. END SUMMARY.

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GOI: AKP Consolidating Power, Moving Away from West  
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12. (S) National Security Adviser Uzi Arad organized an interagency briefing on Turkey for visiting NSC Senior Director Dan Shapiro November 15. Representatives of Israel, NSC, MFA, MOD, IDF J-5, and Mossad participated in the briefing. The GOI believes Turkey is undergoing a strategic shift, led by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), away from the West and toward a Middle East-focused &Neo-Ottomanism policy, which includes further domestic Islamization. Analysts from the Mossad said that the military and the secular parties have lost influence in Turkey, and the biggest threat to the AKP was now from the more extreme Islamic parties. Therefore, the AKP has increased the pace of Islamization. Furthermore, they said, now that the AKP controls the Presidency, the Premiership, and the Assembly, the AKP will focus next on the legal

establishment. The AKP sees control over the justice sector as important because of the Turkish judiciary's traditional role as a key secular institution, as well as the courts, past involvement in overturning Islamist initiatives. The next step after that, the analysts said, would be exerting greater control over education.

¶3. (S) The key to this &neo-Ottomanism8, according to the GOI officials, is for Turkey to serve as a bridge between the Middle East and the West, both economically and culturally. Colonel Shimon Arad, from the IDF J-5, added that this shift is partly ideological and partly because the Turks have lost faith in the EU process. The Deputy Director of Israel's National Security Council, Rear Admiral (res) Avriel Bar Josef described the bridging strategy as a return to the cold war attitude from the 1960's, with the West and the Muslim world replacing the U.S. and the USSR. Director of the NSC International Department Eitan Naeh added that the Turks do not seem to be considering how their actions will affect their relationship with the United States, or the fact that Iran is a long-term rival with Turkey for regional power. Iran, he said, is sensitive to this rivalry and is already concerned about Turkey's growing influence in Syria and the Gulf.

¶4. (S) Col. Arad believes Turkey will continue to move closer to Iran, largely because Turkey needs Iranian oil and gas, both for domestic consumption and as a transit country. However, the Mossad analyst added that shift is not purely economic and Turkey has raised the profile of its political support for Iran. For example, they said, Turkey was one of the few influential countries not to condemn Iran following the disclosure of the secret nuclear facility at Qom. The Mossad also said that Turkish government is now assisting Iran in by-passing international financial sanctions and is ignoring Iranian weapons smuggling to Syria (and from Syria to Hizballah) through Turkey. Col. Arad added that while Turkey doesn't actively support weapons smuggling, it only takes actions against smugglers in specific cases where there is international pressure. He suggested that the Turks might be more responsive to U.S. pressure on this issue than they have been to Israeli complaints.

¶5. (C) On Hamas, Col. Arad believes that the AKP support is not just strategic, but also emotional. The Mossad thinks the AKP sees historical similarities between Hamas and the early days of their party's struggle against Turkey's secular establishment, which they compaq to a corrupt Palestinian Authority. The AKP thinks it can help Hamas become more moderate and mainstream, as the AKP has done. Naeh, who was DCM in Ankara in the 1990s, noted that Turkish ties to Hamas are long-standing. He recounted that when he attended an Assembly session in 1996, there was a row of senior Hamas representatives sitting behind them. Hamas, Naeh said, is not seen as purely a terrorist organization by the AKP. Col. Arad believes that Turkey is trying to break down the divide between the radical and moderate camps in the Muslim world, and may not realize how dangerous that is.

¶6. (S) The GOI officials agreed that the Turkish military is significantly weakened. The Mossad analysts said that the AKP used the EU accession process to weaken the military, as EU guidelines promoted an end to the military's traditional role as the guardian of Turkey's Ataturkist secular system. The military accepted this because of their support for EU ascension. The Mossad analysts also think the military may have cut a deal with the AKP in 2008 in order to get the army's preferred candidate appointed as CHoD. While there is no evidence of a trend toward Islamization within the military high command, MoD representative Rami Yungman noted that in the past the military had periodically purged religious officers from its ranks, but has not done this for two or three years. Yungman and Col Arad both suggested that the more junior ranks of the Turkish officer corps may be following the broader Islamic trQd in Turkish society.

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¶17. (C) Naor Gilon, MFA Deputy Director General for Western Europe, asserted that the decline in Israel's bilateral relationship with Turkey is not really over bilateral issues, but is the result of Turkey's strategic alignment away from the West and towards the Muslim world. Gilon explained that relations between Turkey and Israel have been on a long, steady decline since PM Erdogan took power. In addition to Cast Lead, the Davos incident, and Anatolian Eagle, Gilon said, the relationship was not helped by the GOI denying FM Davutoglu permission to visit Gaza directly during a proposed visit to Israel. Eitan Naeh added that Erdogan's anti-Israeli rhetoric has become so bad that even Syrian President Assad has asked Turkey to tone it down, as they hope Turkey can resume its role as a peace process mediator. Gilon noted that Turkey seems comfortable being anti-Israeli, but does not want to be seen as anti-Semitic. That is why there was a quick GOT response in re-editing the inflammatory television series about Gaza following an Israeli protest of the series, initial showing on the government-owned station.

¶18. (C) According to Yungman, there are two main aspects to the Turkish/Israeli relationship: military and symbolic. The symbolic relationship is important because Israel hoped to make it a model for future relations with North Africa, the Gulf, and other Muslim countries. The symbolic relationship also added stability to the Middle East, as the cooperation between the region's two biggest military powers deterred rogue countries. For example, Yungman believes Turkey was able to deal more effectively with Syria during the crisis in 1998-99 over Syria's sheltering of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan because Syria feared that a conflict with Turkey could become a two-front war involving Israel. Unfortunately, he added, the discord between Israel and Turkey emboldens unhelpful regional actors.

¶19. (C) The military relationship is ongoing, Yungman explained, despite the Anatolian Eagle postponement. Just the week before, he said, there was a trilateral search and rescue exercise (Israel, Turkey, and Jordan) that involved Israeli military aircraft. Because this was not very public, it proceeded as planned. However, Yungman noted that there are no planned mil-mil events on the 2010 calendar, and they normally have several tentative dates by this time.

¶10. (C) The value of the military and military-industrial relationship is also declining for Turkey. Col. Arad explained that Turkey's military capacity has improved and Turkey does not need Israel as much as it did 15 years ago. Israeli defense sales to Turkey are declining, and public sentiment in Turkey would probably prevent any major sales in the near future. Gilon added that overall, Israel actually has little to offer Turkey bilaterally. The Mossad analysts agreed, saying that Turkey wants a good relationship with Israel in the short term to help consolidate their bridging strategy, but does not need Israel over the long term.

¶11. (C) Because of these factors, the Israelis also believed that there was little they could do to repair the relationship with Turkey in the near future. Therefore, the current Israeli strategy is to play down differences -- unless they cross red lines like the television program, preserve what they can, and hopefully move to gradually increasing bilateral contacts. In the near future Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor Fouad Ben-Eliezer is planning to visit Turkey to engage the Turks in a joint economic dialogue. There are also planned exchanges at the Director General level for both the MFA and the MOD. The a further step could be a meeting between President Gul and President Peres on the sidelines of a multilateral event, and Gilon said they have quietly floated that idea to various potential third-country hosts. However, Gilon emphasized, the GOI has no illusions and believes that little will change until there is a major event or a different regional dynamic.

¶12. (S) Hof asked if a return to Turkish mediation with Syria could be that event. Col. Arad responded that it might

be possible to use Turkish mediation to improve the bilateral relationship, but Turkey appears to have taken Syria,s side, so the IDF would recommend against engaging Turkey in any Israel/Syria negotiations. Another potential event would be U.S. plans to create a trilateral aerial defense pact with the U.S. and Turkey that could cover radar, missile defense, and other systems. However, Yungman asked that the U.S. not discuss this with Turkey until we develop a shared vision of missile defense in the Defense Policy Advisory Group (DPAG).

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Israel Believes the U.S. Can Help  
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¶13. (S) The Israeli officials asserted that the U.S., and the EU, could influence Turkey,s Western orientation and help repair the bilateral relationship between Israel and Turkey. Yungman suggested that the U.S. emphasize the need for countries to work together against terror threats, as well as the importance of ties with like-minded governments such as Israel and Jordan. On Iran, the U.S. may be able to convince Turkey to stay within the international consensus, especially on the nuclear issue.

¶14. (C) Naeh added that the U.S. should take Turkey at its word. PM Erdogan has said that he wants stability, and the relationship with Israel supports stability. Finally, the Mossad analysts said that Turkey needs to realize they are not experts on Arab affairs, and have not served their own interests through their support for Hamas over the Palestinian Authority.

¶15. (U) Senior Director Shapiro has cleared this cable.  
CUNNINGHAM